THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD VII

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BY THE AUTHOR OF
THE VICTORIAN AGE

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THE VICTORIAN AGE

LONDON: A. L. HUMPHREYS
1921

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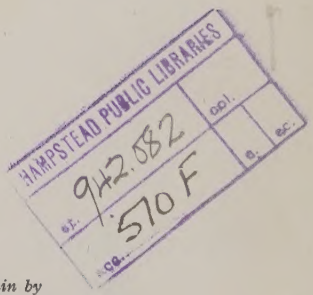
THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD VII

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE VICTORIAN AGE"

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1925



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TO

DAPHNE

PREFACE

THE reign of Edward VII is likely to be regarded by historians as a period of transition between the great Victorian Age and the present less fortunate epoch. During these few years (1901–1910) we may trace the origin of some of the causes which produced that world-wide convulsion, so aptly named by Mr. Owen Wister "The Pentecost of Calamity."

This small volume makes no pretence to give a detailed history of the reign, for which the material will not be available for many years. Its aim is to present briefly the chief events of the nine years and to indicate the tendencies in thought and opinion by which those events were influenced.

In order to complete the narrative it has occasionally been necessary to travel beyond the limits of the reign.

THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD VII

I

KING EDWARD VII succeeded to the throne on the death of his mother on January 22nd, 1901. Sixty-three and a half years had passed since Queen Victoria began her reign ; and only the very old could remember the days when William IV was King.

It is probable that the accession of the youthful Queen in 1837 preserved the British monarchy ; for the Duke of Cumberland, the next heir, was even more unpopular than his elder brothers and could not have been expected to shine as a constitutional sovereign.

King Edward, who had passed his fifty-ninth year when he ascended the throne, had long been a favourite both in Society and elsewhere. His tact and attractive

manners endeared him to all with whom he came in contact, while his love of sport and his *joie de vivre* appealed strongly to the multitude.

Though the practice of the British Constitution debars the Sovereign from active participation in the Government, there are still occasions when his influence can be exercised with advantage to the State. Many erroneous ideas of the part played by King Edward in the direction of Foreign Affairs were prevalent during his reign. The Entente with France and the subsequent understanding with Russia were attributed to his machinations by the Germans and others, whereas these *rapprochements* reflected the deliberate policy of two successive governments. The King undoubtedly worked hard to bring about the results desired by his ministers and contributed in no small measure to their success. He foresaw, as did most persons of intelligence, that Germany was the only real menace to the peace of Europe ; but this did not prevent him from striving to help his ministers in the last two years of his reign to bring about an understanding with that country. If his efforts in this

instance were fruitless, the fault lay rather with that arrogant power, who thought that she could dominate the world.

King Edward has been called the Peacemaker. Peace in Europe was maintained throughout his reign ; but it is unlikely that, had he lived till 1914, he could have prevented the outbreak of war. Possibly a wiser British government might have restrained Austria from committing her crowning act of folly if it had made clear to her that, in the event of a world war, she would find Great Britain her enemy. A democracy is, however, at a disadvantage in dealing with diplomatic negotiations, as it is dependent on popular feeling, which is liable to fluctuate ; and consequently a democratic government is less able to make binding engagements with foreign countries than an aristocracy or an autocracy. It seems that in future it will be necessary to entrust the maintenance of peace to the somewhat inadequate machinery of the League of Nations.

King Edward undoubtedly increased the popularity of the monarchy and strengthened its position in this country. Queen Victoria had lived in such complete retirement

after Prince Albert's death and her public appearances were so rare that she had come to be regarded as almost mythical by the great majority of her subjects who had little or no chance of seeing her. While they felt a pride in having lived during a reign, which in the whole course of English history was unequalled in length and unparalleled in achievement, they welcomed the advent of a Sovereign who took a part, both active and useful, in national affairs.

II

Queen Victoria in her reign of sixty-three years had ten Prime Ministers and it is rather remarkable that King Edward, who reigned for only nine, should have had four. But it must be remembered that the first of them (Lord Salisbury) had been in office for many years when the Queen died; while the last (Mr. Asquith) continued as head of the government for more than six years under King George V.

Lord Salisbury was the last of the great statesmen who had adorned the Victorian Age, and it was fitting that he should have

lived to see its close. He was a real aristocrat. He had little sympathy for popular prejudices and regarded all newspaper criticism with contempt. By his wise handling of our foreign relations and by his friendly understanding with Lord Rosebery and Lord Kimberley on the opposite benches of the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury contrived to place the foreign policy of this country outside the sphere of political strife. He had been suspected of leanings towards Jingoism during the Beaconsfield Administration of 1874–80 but without any real justification. In later years he had the candour to admit that, in attempting to bolster up the Turks in 1878 and previously at the time of the Crimean War, "we had put our money on the wrong horse." It is rare to find a statesman who combined, as he did, great strength of character with a refreshing sense of humour.

The year that followed King Edward's accession was mainly occupied in winding up the war in South Africa which had begun in October 1899. Though it was evident when the battle of Paardeberg had been fought and Pretoria had been occupied by Lord Roberts in 1900 that the war could

have only one ending, the Boers maintained a gallant resistance under the leadership of Generals Botha, Smuts, De Wet and De la Rey after the flight of President Kruger and the surrender of General Cronje. Peace was at length concluded on May 31st, 1902 at Vereeniging, the terms having been arranged between Lord Kitchener, who had succeeded Lord Roberts in the command of the British Forces, and General Louis Botha, destined subsequently to play so prominent a part in the development of South Africa. The two Boer states then became incorporated in the British Empire ; but representative institutions were withheld.

By 1901 Lord Salisbury's health had begun to fail. In the following year he retired and was succeeded in the premiership by his nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, who had led the Conservative Party in the House of Commons since the death of Mr. W. H. Smith in 1891.

Mr. Balfour had made his reputation as Chief Secretary for Ireland in the troublesome period which followed the rejection of the first Home Rule Bill ; and no surprise had been felt when he was chosen to lead the Commons. During his uncle's

lifetime he had been eminently successful in this capacity ; although from the fall of the Rosebery Government until the outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899, no vital issue arose to disturb the political arena. Perhaps the action for which Mr. Balfour will be chiefly remembered in history is the promptness with which he met the situation created by the early reverses in South Africa in 1899. It was he who insisted, after the battle of Colenso, on dispatching Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener together with large additional forces to the seat of war, and thereby restored the situation which had become extremely critical.

Mr. Balfour had and still has many devoted friends and admirers ; but the most enthusiastic of them would hardly maintain that he was a successful Prime Minister. The causes of his failure are difficult to explain. Perhaps his intellect was too subtle and his philosophy too detached for the practical requirements of a statesman. But whatever the cause may have been, the result can hardly be disputed. He had inherited from his uncle the unchallenged leadership of the Conservative Party and was possessed of a large majority in the

House of Commons. By his devious policy with regard to Tariff Reform he alienated so many of his supporters that, three years after Lord Salisbury's retirement, he led his party to the greatest defeat they had suffered since 1832. In the *débâcle* he lost his own seat in Manchester, which he had held for twenty years. Many members of his Cabinet were also defeated.

In reading the speeches of the period it is difficult to discover what were the real views of the Prime Minister on the subject. It is probable that he had no belief in Free Trade or in sound economics generally, as was shown by his advocacy of Bimetallism ten years earlier; but he foresaw that it would be a hopeless task to induce the British working classes to vote for food taxes, which Mr. Chamberlain had declared to be a necessary adjunct of Tariff Reform.

By an irony of fate the disaster of 1906 was mainly due to the defection of the two Liberal Unionist statesmen whose adherence in 1886 had given the Conservative party their long period of ascendancy. It would have been easy for Mr. Balfour to have retained in his Cabinet either the Duke of Devonshire or Mr. Chamberlain, but, in

the vain endeavour to find a middle path between Free Trade and Protection, he succeeded in losing the services of both.

Before the General Election took place the Conservative party had become committed to Mr. Chamberlain's policy in spite of Mr. Balfour; though if he had taken a strong line at the beginning of the controversy and had kept the Duke of Devonshire and the Unionist Free Traders in the Cabinet, he would undoubtedly have carried the bulk of his party with him. The Liberals would probably have won the General Election in any case; but their majority would have been relatively small. In looking back on these events after the lapse of twenty years Mr. Balfour's error of judgment in parting with the Duke, who represented all that was best in English political life, seems scarcely conceivable. The Prime Minister failed entirely to realise that while the Unionist Free Traders could and, as the event proved, did, vote with the Liberals, the followers of Mr. Chamberlain had no such option.

Mr. Chamberlain found that the English electorate refused to be hustled into a change of policy by any statesman, however eminent,

just as Mr. Gladstone had discovered when he launched his Home Rule proposals in 1886. On that occasion Mr. Chamberlain had joined with the Duke of Devonshire (then Lord Hartington) in resisting Home Rule ; and their hostility broke up the Liberal party. The Duke in 1903, as might have been expected, remained consistent in his opposition to organic change and proved in the event to be more truly representative of the ordinary Englishman than his more democratic colleague. Mr. Chamberlain's activities on behalf of Protection were undoubtedly the main cause of the overwhelming defeat which overtook the Conservatives in January 1906 ; though the introduction of Chinese indentured labour in the Transvaal, after the war, had aroused vehement opposition among the more unthinking portion of the electorate. The official opposition took advantage of the ignorant clamour which arose to attack the government and Lord Milner, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, whose action on this occasion was probably necessary and certainly wise. The episode furnishes a melancholy example of the weaknesses of a democracy. Conservatism re-

ceived a shock from which it only began to recover on the fall of the Lloyd George government in November 1922. Mr. Baldwin again jeopardised its future by his appeal to the electorate a year later. It is surprising that the experience of 1906 was not enough to deter him from committing his party once more to the policy of protective duties, which apparently exercised a fatal fascination over a large section of his followers. He would seem, however, to be one of Fortune's favourites ; for, owing to the mistakes of his opponents, he received in November 1924 a popular mandate greater than that recorded for any Prime Minister since Grey in 1832. By placing the Socialist Party in office in January 1924, Mr. Asquith succeeded in bringing down the Liberals in the House of Commons to almost the same number as that to which Fox reduced the orthodox Whigs in 1792 by his expressions of sympathy with Revolutionary France. Though the circumstances were totally different, since the power now wielded by the electorate was then mainly in the hands of the owners of pocket boroughs, the underlying cause was the same : a national hatred of revolu-

tion and of all its abettors, however indirect.

Perhaps among the faithful remnant of the party of progress there may be found another Grey who, when the Socialist fallacies shall have been finally exploded, may restore a regenerated Liberalism to its historic place in our political system.

From the reconstruction of the Unionist government in 1900 till the resignation of Mr. Balfour, the Foreign Office was presided over by Lord Lansdowne. He had been brought up in Whig traditions, had been Governor-General of Canada and Viceroy of India, and had held the seals of the War Office during the first five years of Lord Salisbury's last administration. His French ancestry was doubtless an advantage to him and his tenure of the Foreign Office was singularly successful, far more so indeed than had been his administration of the War Office and more so than his Viceroyalty of India.

Two achievements in foreign policy will make this period always memorable: the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 and the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. The first undoubtedly localised the Russo-Japanese

War of 1905. The Great War may have been delayed by the second. The latter calamity would certainly have been prevented by the Entente if Germany had still been governed by a Bismarck.

Whilst Lord Lansdowne was Foreign Secretary it became abundantly clear that any permanent understanding with Germany had become difficult if not impossible.

The Hague Conference, which had been called together in 1899 by the well-meaning but irresolute Czar, Nicholas II, led to no tangible result, as the German and Austrian governments refused even to consider the question of the limitation of armaments. Indeed its very failure seemed to produce the opposite result to that desired and to stimulate the mad competition in warlike preparation among the nations of Europe. As might be expected it was Germany who set the pace ; for she was the one country that was unwilling to maintain the status quo and that hankered after territorial aggrandisement. Not only by increased expenditure on her army did she threaten the security of France and Russia, but by creating a navy, which could only be needed for purposes of aggression, she deliberately

challenged the naval supremacy of Britain. Of no nation in the whole course of history could it be more truly said *Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.*

Whatever may have been the faults of the Czar, posterity will surely render homage to the autocratic ruler who strove, possibly against his own interests, to lessen the crushing burden of ever increasing armaments and to substitute arbitration for war. Like many idealists, he was in advance of his time and his efforts were in vain. But he pointed a way and sowed a harvest which one day may be garnered by others.

It had become obvious during the Boer War, even to the least observant, that the German government was not only itself hostile but that it deliberately stirred up hatred of England amongst its own people. The semi-official press, the professors, the pastors, the Pan-Germans and persons even more brainless than these latter were all encouraged to denounce England. The Kaiser's telegram to President Kruger at the time of the Jameson raid in 1896 had already won the unthinking applause of the multitude, who were daily encouraged to regard England as the enemy.

The hostility of the lower and middle class Germans was no doubt partly to be explained by envy ; but it would never have reached the point it did during King Edward's reign without the artificial stimulus applied by the German government. To find a parallel in history for a government in times of peace inculcating in its subjects hatred of another nation, we must go back to the *Delenda est Carthago* of the Romans ; but Rome and Carthage had been age-long enemies before that celebrated phrase was coined.

When Germany began to build a fleet, it was deemed necessary for this country to depart from the policy of splendid isolation which had been followed for many years. The Entente with France was consequently negotiated by Lord Lansdowne in 1904 and was followed by an understanding with Russia made by Sir Edward Grey, who succeeded him at the Foreign Office a year later. It had hardly been concluded when the German government determined to test it by making an entirely gratuitous *démarche* with regard to Morocco, thinking perhaps that the Liberal ministry, which had just succeeded

to power, would prove less favourable to France than its predecessor. The result must have been a grievous surprise to Germany; as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, though a lover of peace, was not a pro-German and showed plainly that he was prepared to uphold the Entente, which in fact became closer from that date.

The legislative achievements of Mr. Balfour's government were not remarkable. A somewhat reactionary Education Bill and an Irish Land Purchase Bill were the most important. The brilliant Chief Secretary, Mr. George Wyndham, was sacrificed in order to placate the representatives of Ulster and an opportunity of conciliating Southern Ireland was lost. The Prime Minister's treatment of his lieutenant on this occasion created a painful impression at the time and was perhaps the least creditable episode in his career.

Mr. Balfour's two successive War Secretaries effected nothing in the way of Army reform. Mr. Brodrick succeeded in incurring some measure of unpopularity by introducing a new cap of German design for the Guards; and Mr. Arnold Forster created Army Corps, which existed only on paper.

After the departure of Mr. Chamberlain and the Duke of Devonshire in September 1903, the Balfour administration maintained an uneasy existence for another two years, until in December 1905 the Prime Minister suddenly determined to resign. His reasons for this action were not apparent at the time and have never been explained since ; but it was surmised that he thought the Liberal leaders would find it difficult to form a government and that the electoral prospects of his party might thereby be improved. He may have calculated that the Liberal League, formed by Lord Rosebery at the time of the South African War to uphold the doctrines of a sane Imperialism against the attacks of Mr. Lloyd George and other pro-Boer politicians, had created too deep a schism in the Liberal party to be healed easily. The Liberal Imperialists, as the members of the League had come to be called, included among leading members of the House of Commons Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Haldane and Sir Henry Fowler. By the time of Mr. Balfour's resignation, the cause for which they had contended may be said to have been decided in their favour. Moreover the attack on

Free Trade and the prospect of a return to power had brought them all back into the official fold with the solitary exception of their founder and chief. Lord Rosebery, to use his own metaphor, preferred to plough "a lonely furrow" and thus deprived his country of the services of her most brilliant statesman. It is impossible not to feel sympathy for anyone who grows weary of modern politics and politicians with their petty personal squabbles, their unworthy compromises and their shameless bribes to the electors; and particularly for one who, like Lord Rosebery, had already tasted all the fruits and experienced all the joys of successful ambition.

III

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was sent for by the King and he succeeded in forming a strong ministry in which all sections of Liberalism were represented. The only difficulty experienced was the desire of Sir Edward Grey that the Prime Minister should go to the Lords and Mr. Asquith become leader in the

Commons. His objections, however, were overcome; so Mr. Balfour's hopes, if he really cherished them, of disunion among his opponents, were doomed to disappointment. Mr. Asquith became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Edward Grey Foreign Secretary, Mr. John Morley Secretary for India, Lord Elgin Secretary for the Colonies and Mr. Haldane Secretary for War. The veteran Lord Ripon, who had served in the cabinets of Palmerston, Russell and Gladstone, returned to office as Lord Privy Seal, and Lord Crewe became President of the Council. The advanced Radicals were represented by Mr. Lloyd George at the Board of Trade and by Mr. John Burns at the Local Government Board, the latter being the first working man to obtain Cabinet rank.

The Campbell-Bannerman Administration was efficient and successful; but for the Prime Minister himself success had come too late. He was only 67 but had not the physique of Palmerston or Gladstone at that age. Hampered from the very start by the illness of his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached and who died in August 1906, his own health began to deteriorate

shortly afterwards and eventually compelled him to resign in April 1908, three weeks before his death. Owing to the hostility of the House of Lords, in which assembly the Liberal Party had long been in a hopeless minority, no great legislative achievement marked his administration. Unsuccessful attempts were made to deal with the thorny subjects of Education and Plural Voting but both were thwarted by the Upper Chamber, which allowed a measure of a really mischievous character, the Trades Disputes Act, to pass unamended. This measure, introduced to placate the newly formed Labour Party, placed the Trade Unions above the law and legalised what is euphemistically known as "Peaceful Picketing"—an infringement of individual liberty entirely alien to the most elementary conception of justice. Any Second Chamber, which could have placed principle above party, would have rejected this measure with contumely; but philosophical detachment was probably the last quality that could be expected from the hereditary House. A misguided desire to pacify the Trade Unions, combined doubtless with an exaggerated fear of their power,

made the Conservative opposition equally responsible with the Liberal government for this enactment.

Pensions were conferred on the aged poor in 1908. Though not passed until Mr. Asquith had become Prime Minister this measure was introduced during the Campbell-Bannerman period; and Campbell-Bannerman is entitled to such credit, or discredit, as may attach to it. While there was something to be said for these pensions in theory, in practice they tended to discourage thrift—a quality for which Englishmen have never been famous. The main objection, however, was their cost which, at first comparatively small, has since owing to extension become increasingly burdensome. Another objection to the scheme, almost as strong as the financial one, was that it displayed that tendency to grandmotherly legislation, so beloved of Socialists, which has had such a demoralising effect upon the electorate. The introduction of Old Age Pensions may be noted by future historians as a sign of weakening of national character. It would not have appealed to the more robust conscience of the two preceding generations. Needless to say no

party had the courage to oppose so vote-catching a measure ; and the voice of that sound economist Mr. Harold Cox, which alone was raised in protest, was as that of one crying in the wilderness.

The only crisis in International politics which occurred during this short government was the Kaiser's rattling of his sabre over Morocco early in 1906. This has been alluded to already. The Liberal Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary proved to be as alive to the menace of German hegemony as their predecessors. The result of a Conference at Algeciras completed the German discomfiture, for it showed that Italy could not be relied upon as an active partner in the Triple Alliance. The Germans may have found some consolation for their failure in the fall, the previous June, of M. Delcassé, the author of the Entente ; but this event was due to the fickleness and timidity of the French who preferred to sacrifice their minister rather than to incur even the smallest risk of war.

Mr. Haldane was far more successful at the War Office than his two immediate predecessors. His Territorial Army had more substance than Mr. Arnold Forster's

Army Corps ; and the Expeditionary Force, which was in the main his creation, probably saved the situation in August 1914. The magnitude of his achievement, though freely recognised by military experts, has never been fully appreciated by the general public. If he failed to provide fully for the inevitable conflict, the blame for this failure was due to the political exigencies of the Liberal party and must rest with the government as a whole.

Mr. Morley presided at the India Office over the destinies of our great Eastern dependency. The Reforms which he inaugurated in conjunction with Lord Minto were obviously of a tentative nature and in little more than ten years were superseded by the Dyarchy of Mr. Montagu. Though some changes were possibly required, this last experiment has lessened the authority of the British rule in India without adding to its efficiency.

The principal achievement of the Campbell-Bannerman administration was the granting of self-government to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, our recent enemies, a measure which was followed by their incorporation with Cape Colony and

Natal under the title of the Union of South Africa. The wisdom of this policy was demonstrated by the events of 1914 and subsequently ; but it was vehemently opposed at the time by Lord Milner and Mr. Balfour, who predicted the direst consequences. By following the precedent of Lord Durham in Canada nearly seventy years earlier, the Campbell-Bannerman government showed itself true to the best traditions of Liberalism and deserves for this act, at any rate, the gratitude of posterity.

The opinion, very generally expressed at the time by nearly all his opponents and by some of his supporters, that Campbell-Bannerman was nothing more than a successful mediocrity, was almost certainly erroneous. Though entirely devoid of the rhetorical gifts of Lord Rosebery or the debating power of Mr. Balfour and with no pretension to the genius of Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury, he possessed nevertheless shrewd common sense, considerable administrative ability and, above all, character, the most valuable attribute of a statesman. His qualities were similar to those of his contemporary, the 8th Duke of Devonshire. Had they both been born a

generation earlier they would have made admirable leaders of the Liberal forces in the two Houses. On the other hand, had Campbell-Bannerman been twenty years younger, he might have guided his country through the great war with more wisdom than his successors. He would assuredly not have allowed the mantle to be torn from his shoulders by an unscrupulous subordinate, and he would have worked in harmony with the military commanders, while his affection for France and his knowledge of her language would have been an invaluable asset.

IV

Mr. Asquith became Prime Minister on April 8th, 1908. He had previously occupied the position of Home Secretary (1892–95) under Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery and, since the formation of the Campbell-Bannerman administration, he had been Chancellor of the Exchequer. In this capacity he had acted as Leader of the House of Commons when the Prime Minister was absent and was clearly designated

as his successor. He had proved an able administrator at the Home Office, but at the Exchequer he had disappointed the believers in Gladstonian finance by increasing the graduation of the death duties.

Mr. Asquith was destined to fill the office of Prime Minister under varying conditions for eight and a half years. When he left office in December 1916 only the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward (by that time Viscount) Grey and the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. George Lambert, still occupied their original positions in the Government.

This sketch, however, is only concerned with the first two years of the Asquith Administration. Ostensibly it appeared that the new Prime Minister, with his great majority in the Commons still practically intact, was in a singularly fortunate position ; but on closer examination it will be seen that he had many drawbacks to contend with. The very magnitude of the victory in 1906 was to prove in the end fatal to the Liberal Party. The members returned at that Election were a most miscellaneous body. Many of the so-called Liberals were really Socialists and subse-

quently joined the Labour Party. Others, probably the majority, were pure opportunists ; while cranks of all kinds, who had long been the bane of Liberalism, abounded in unprecedented numbers. These included temperance fanatics of various shades, anti-vaccinationists, anti-vivisectionists, pacifists, land nationalisers, and believers in almost every form of human folly. The philosophic Radicalism of the Victorian Era had given place to a weak sentimentalism, which was inclined falsely to attribute to economic causes the misfortunes of the incompetent and of the unfit. By a strange freak of heredity there were found among these latter-day democrats a son of Queen Victoria's wise and sagacious private secretary and a great-nephew of Lord Macaulay.

Liberalism and Socialism represent two opposite ideals ; and compromise between them is not really possible. A true Liberal believes in, and should aim at, the minimum of state control and the maximum of individual freedom, while a Socialist aims at the maximum of state control and ignores personal liberty altogether. Socialism indeed has all the disadvantages of Despotism without the one redeeming merit, effici-

ency, which a despot, like Napoleon, may occasionally provide.

The new Prime Minister, though liked and trusted by the majority of Liberals, was looked upon with suspicion by the advanced wing and particularly by the faddists with whom he had scant sympathy. The pacifists could not forget his attitude in the Boer war nor the Imperialism which he had manifested as a disciple of Lord Rosebery.

A third difficulty, which occurs inevitably whenever a ministry is formed under a new leader of the same political complexion as his predecessor, is that the choice of colleagues is to a great extent determined for him. He is even hampered in the allocation of offices by the claims of existing holders. This was undoubtedly the case on the formation of the Russell, Disraeli and Rosebery governments in 1865, 1868 and 1894 and again in 1923 when Mr. Baldwin succeeded Mr. Bonar Law.

It must be remembered, also, that unlike Russell, Palmerston and Gladstone, Mr. Asquith could not entirely disregard the extremists on his side. In the days of Queen Victoria the only choice lay between the

two Constitutional Parties which may be said to have existed since the days of Charles I. There was now the Socialist Labour Party which made an increasing appeal both to men of advanced views and to idealists with more heart than head, who were influenced by emotion rather than by reason. The Conservative leaders were in a happier position in this respect ; though, in dealing with their own Die-Hards, they often failed to take full advantage of the fact.

Extremists of all kinds generally supply in enthusiasm what they lack in intelligence and for this reason they are almost always treated with more consideration than they deserve. This tendency in England is not confined to the political sphere. It may be observed also in the tolerance displayed by Ecclesiastical authorities to the vagaries of ritualistic clerics.

It was understood at the time that Mr. Asquith had designated Mr. Morley as his successor at the Treasury. It would have been well for the Government and for the Liberal Party if that veteran statesman, the ultimate depositary of the Gladstonian tradition, could have been prevailed upon

to take charge of the finances of his country ; but he was seventy years of age and had grown weary of the House of Commons, a very different assembly from that which he had first entered twenty-five years earlier. He preferred to continue in the calmer atmosphere of the India Office and to seek in the hereditary chamber the dignified repose which was no longer to be found elsewhere. From this date the author of "Compromise" was to be known as Viscount Morley of Blackburn.

The appointment of Mr. Lloyd George to the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer was obviously made for political reasons and without regard to his fitness for the post. As the event was to prove no one could have been less qualified to guard the nation's finances. During the seven years that he remained at the Exchequer, he succeeded in turning the Treasury into a spending department ; and all check upon extravagance disappeared.

Lord Elgin retired at the same time as his Chief and was succeeded at the Colonial Office by Lord Crewe. Mr. McKenna became First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Walter Runci-

man entered the Cabinet, which remained otherwise unchanged.

Apart from Old Age Pensions the chief measure brought forward in 1908 was a Licensing Bill, which was rejected by the Lords, who in this instance may have reflected public opinion more faithfully than the Commons. Most sensible people looked with suspicion on anything that commended itself to so-called temperance reformers, a body of men strangely unphilosophical and narrow-minded in their outlook.

Two domestic problems confronted the new Prime Minister—the future of the House of Lords and Ireland. It was obvious that the first would have to be tackled before the second; and, as the country had failed to be roused by the rejection of the Education Bill or of the Bill for abolishing Plural Voting, a new reason for attack had to be found. The Budget of 1909 was therefore brought forward. It was an ingenious, if unworthy, attempt to force the issue. Owing to the folly of the House of Lords the immediate object sought was attained but only by the sacrifice of Liberal principles and the ultimate undoing of the Party. Little respect could be felt

for a government which allowed its Chancellor of the Exchequer to inculcate class hatred and to pose as the hero of Limehouse. By such proceedings moderate men were alienated while the Socialists were not placated.

In their eagerness to score a success over their opponents, Mr. Asquith and his colleagues seem to have forgotten that the primary function of Liberalism is to uphold individual liberty and not to indulge in experiments of State Socialism. By making no endeavour to safeguard Liberty from the attacks of Socialism, a more insidious and therefore more dangerous foe than any tyrant, the Liberal leaders, perhaps inadvertently, betrayed "the cause for which Hampden bled on the field and Sidney on the scaffold." They have since reaped their reward.

V

After the Turkish revolution of July 1908, by which Abdul Hamid was deposed, the Kaiser encouraged his Austrian ally to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina. In prac-

tice this act made no difference ; as Austria had in effect governed these countries since 1878 when her protectorate over them had been recognised at the Congress of Berlin. But the act of annexation was none the less a gross breach of International Law, and as such, was warmly resented by England as well as by the other signatory powers. The reasons for this action have never been explained. In view of the events in Turkey it would have been easy for Austria to have obtained the desired alteration of the status quo by the ordinary diplomatic methods, but she chose deliberately to flout Russia and the Slavonic races by her arrogant behaviour. It need hardly be said that she received the enthusiastic support of the Kaiser, who was ever eager to stir up bad blood between his neighbours. It was indeed through the action of Germany that Sir Edward Grey's efforts to have the position regularised after the event were frustrated.

There are few more melancholy episodes in history than the complete failure of Austrian statesmanship during the reign of Francis Joseph. It had required all the genius of a Kaunitz or a Metternich to main-

tain an uncertain equilibrium in that Empire of many nationalities ; but the Emperor himself and the Ministers, whom he selected, were altogether unequal to the task. During the earlier years of his reign a few of his Ministers, notably Count Andrassy, were moderately competent, but the difference between the sagacity of Metternich and the ineptitude of Count Berchtold is hard to measure. When Francis Joseph ascended the throne in the critical days of 1848, both Hungary and the Italian provinces of Venetia and Lombardy, supported by Charles Albert of Savoy, were in revolt against his authority. Hungary was crushed into submission by a Russian army and the Austrian possessions in Italy were saved for a short time longer by the genius of Radetzky. It is possible that, if a reasonable scheme of decentralisation and conciliation had been adopted immediately after 1848, Milan and Venice might have remained for many years under the dominion of Vienna ; but the Hapsburgs, like the Bourbons, were unable to profit by experience ; and in consequence Lombardy became part of United Italy in 1859, through the action of France, and Venetia in 1866 through the action of

Prussia. Hungary indeed remained and, after 1866, would appear to have become the dominant factor in the Dual Monarchy.

Gratitude formed no part of the mental equipment of Francis Joseph. He could never forgive the Russians for having saved his Empire. He was credited until almost the close of his reign with a love of peace, but with little apparent justification. In 1859 he blundered into a war with France, in 1864 he gratuitously allied himself with Prussia to coerce Denmark, and in 1866, having quarrelled with his recent ally, he succeeded in losing for Austria the hegemony of Germany. But he forgave the foe who had conquered him, the hereditary enemy of the Hapsburgs, though he could not forgive the friend who had saved him. Had he been a true lover of peace he would either have refused to become a party to the Triple Alliance, or would have allowed it to lapse and have joined the Entente Powers. It was the more natural alliance historically. Russia and Austria had been allies throughout the 18th century and during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, with the exception of the six years following the Peace of Tilsit. England and

Austria had never been enemies. France had as often been an ally as an enemy. Prussia had been Austria's bitterest foe, had despoiled her of Silesia and had robbed her of the leadership of Germany. Strange indeed that Austria should have chosen this power as her friend. The mere fact that she possessed many millions of Slavonic subjects should have made her cultivate the friendship and if possible the alliance of the great Slav power, Russia ; but her statesmen were blind to the true interests of their country and were bewitched by the might and power of Germany, which they came at last to believe invincible. No excuse can be found for Francis Joseph and his advisers. While the policy of German world dominion was at least intelligible, though, as the event proved, unobtainable for Germany, it could have brought no profit to Austria whose place, had the Germans been victorious, could only have been that of a humble satellite of their mighty neighbour. How much more honourable would have been her position if she had scorned the German embrace and thrown in her lot with England and France, the champions of civilisation and

liberty. The Hapsburgs were doomed to share the destiny of other Royal Houses, which have outlived their utility, and to expiate in exile the follies and lack of judgment that had brought ruin on their subjects.

Fate, however, was kinder to Francis Joseph than to his far more deserving contemporary, Nicholas II of Russia. The former died naturally at the great age of 86, while the issue of the war, which he might have prevented, was still uncertain. The latter fell a victim, together with his wife and all his children, to the fury of the Bolshevists.

It had long been predicted that the Dual-Monarchy would break up on the death of Francis Joseph and that this occurrence would be the signal for the World War. In the event it was he, himself, who precipitated the conflict and by his own act sealed the doom both of his dynasty and of his Empire.

Germany, during the years of King Edward's reign, was preparing steadily for the war which she considered necessary both to confirm her supremacy in Europe and to augment her external possessions. Prob-

ably Bernhardi's book "World Power or Downfall" was typical of ordinary German mentality at this period. It is even possible that the more ignorant classes believed the fable, carefully fostered by the Pan-German press, of the encirclement of Germany. In 1908, when the Kaiser, thinking that it might be wise to diminish the growing tension between England and Germany, had his famous interview with the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, a storm of indignation burst forth which showed that his government had created a sentiment of hatred against England which it could no longer control. This episode brought to light more clearly than anything else the intense anti-English feeling throughout Germany and demonstrated how far the incompetent successors of Bismarck had allowed themselves to depart from his policy. For this hatred, which had been artificially stimulated, there was of course no shadow of justification. England coveted nothing that was German and only sought the maintenance of peace. In Germany, peace was regarded as a time of preparation for war—for *der Tag*—to which patriots, more fervent than intelligent, drank copious

libations. All the resources of science were employed towards perfecting the military machine both on land and sea and latterly also in the air. It is impossible not to feel a certain degree of admiration for the marvellous sense of discipline displayed by the German nation during these years. It might have been imitated with advantage by their neighbours. When at length *der Tag* arrived, it was found, however, that a blundering diplomacy had succeeded in uniting against Germany a combination of enemies against which all her sacrifices were to prove vain. It is true that the hostile coalition was scarcely in appearance so menacing as that which confronted Frederick the Great during the Seven Years' War. But, unlike Prussia in the 18th century, Germany had no supreme military genius to counterbalance the greater numbers of her adversaries; and it was only necessary for these to hold together to assure her eventual downfall. In the earlier period also, Prussia had, in the England of the elder Pitt, a more powerful ally than the Austria of Francis Joseph.

The Russo-Japanese war of 1905 had demonstrated that the Russian army was

far less formidable than had been generally supposed and justified the opinion of those who had declined to be alarmed by the bogey of a Russian invasion of India. As a result of the operations the Russian navy was virtually destroyed, Port Arthur fell, and Japanese predominance in the Far East was established on a solid basis. The ultimate results of this unfortunate conflict were even more important. It showed the incompetence and corruption of the Russian bureaucracy and gave an immense impetus to the revolutionary elements which had long been gathering strength throughout the Empire. A successful war against Japan, or ten years later against Germany, might have saved the Romanoff dynasty; but failure could only hasten their ruin. The well-meaning Czar endeavoured to restore his popularity by establishing parliamentary institutions, but these proved ill-adapted to a people who were devoid of all genius for self-government. The first Duma was completely dominated by extreme Socialists and was dissolved after sitting for only ten weeks. It so happened that when this event took place some Russian delegates were attending the Inter-Parliamentary

Union in London and the then Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, in welcoming them, uttered amid applause the sentence "La Douma est morte, Vive la Douma!" His intense faith in representative institutions made him regard them as a remedy for every evil, irrespective of circumstances or time. The two revolutions of 1917 proved beyond doubt that some form of despotism was the only possible government for Russia. Unhappily for her she found as her despot a Lenin instead of a Napoleon.

The Russian defeat of 1905 followed closely on the Anglo-French Entente. The age-long antagonism between France and Germany was always liable to break out; and no confidence could be felt that the Kaiser would not find some pretext for commencing hostilities. To all appearances war was only narrowly avoided over Morocco in 1905 and again in 1911. France under the third Republic had displayed none of her ancient fondness for military glory. Her alliance with Russia was purely defensive; and no person of intelligence could discern in the Entente with England the smallest menace to Ger-

many. There can be little doubt, however, that it had an irritating effect upon the German people, who had been taught by their politicians to be dissatisfied with their lack of a "place in the sun" and to covet the possessions of their neighbours. Though France had many scares of an attack by Germany between 1871 and 1914, it is doubtful if she fully realised her peril. The energy which should have been concentrated on measures of defence was largely expended on domestic squabbles of an unedifying nature. Foremost among these disputes was the intense anti-clericalism of the extreme left which came to a head under the administration of M. Combes, when the Concordat, established by Napoleon in 1801, was abolished and diplomatic relations with the Vatican were discontinued. It is difficult for an Englishman to understand the feeling which prompted M. Viviani, afterwards Prime Minister, in a speech delivered in November 1906, to use these words: "*Nous avons arraché les consciences humaines à la croyance. Lorsqu'un misérable, fatigué du poids du jour, ployait les genoux, nous l'avons relevé ; nous lui avons dit que derrière les nuages il n'y avait que des chimères.*

Ensemble et d'un geste magnifique, nous avons éteint dans le ciel les lumières qu'on ne rallumera plus." This fanatical rhetoric, almost ludicrous from the lips of a rationalist, illustrates the distance travelled by the modern freethinkers of France from the Deism of Voltaire, who declared that, if there had not been a God, it would have been necessary to invent one. Religious instruction in schools was forbidden ; and all that politicians could do was done to destroy the faith of the people. Like most violent measures, this policy produced in due course a reaction. By 1914 there were signs of a religious revival in France. It appeared that many of the generals who achieved fame during the war, unlike their predecessors of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, were practising Catholics. Patronage is often more deadly than persecution. It may well be that the efforts of M. Combes and his friends occasioned less harm to religion in France than was caused in England by the contemptuous indifference or easy tolerance of those who had lost the power to believe.

Italy, though she produced no great statesman, like Cavour or Ricasoli, made steady

progress; and the improvement in her financial position was shown by the rise in the sterling value of the lira. She continued to be a member of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria; but it became more and more evident, as time went on, that her partnership with the latter country, her ancient enemy, was unnatural. Successful efforts were made to bring about a *rapprochement* with France. These were to bear fruit in 1915, when Italy decided to join the Allies (Great Britain, France, Russia, Japan, Belgium and Serbia) in the world war. The Triple Alliance was severely strained by the Italo-Turkish war of 1912, as a result of which Tripoli was wrested from the dominions of the Sultan.

In the United States, Theodore Roosevelt was President from 1901 till 1909. He was certainly the most interesting and probably also the strongest President since Abraham Lincoln. It was unfortunate for America and for the world that he was no longer in office in 1914. He would undoubtedly have caused his country to declare war upon Germany after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, and thereby would in all probability have materially

shortened the conflict. And he would not, like his successor, have complicated the Peace Treaty by insisting on theoretical points which have proved more troublesome than helpful. President Wilson had the misfortune to be an *idéologue* when the occasion above all things required a realist.

In Latin America, the only outstanding figure was Porfirio Diaz, one of the most remarkable rulers of his time. Unhappily his countrymen were incapable of appreciating the advantages of stable government. Displaying an ingratitude seldom equalled in history, they drove him into exile in his old age ; and Mexico relapsed again into the anarchy from which Diaz had redeemed her. Posterity will surely render justice to his memory.

VI

Owing to the impossibility of arriving at an understanding with Germany for the limitation of naval armaments, it became necessary in 1909 to provide for a large increase in expenditure on the British

navy as well as for the money required for the old age pensions. The time-honoured method of increasing the Income Tax and the indirect taxes in equal proportions would have been adequate for the occasion ; but the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, despising the traditions of Peel and Gladstone, was bent upon a more spectacular achievement.

The Budget of 1909 was designed by Mr. Lloyd George both to gratify what was then the Socialist wing of his party and to force an issue with the House of Lords. The Land taxes, comprised in it, were regarded by the Conservative party as the invention of the Devil ; while sound economists were opposed to the principle of graduation which, hitherto confined to the Death Duties, was now extended to the Income Tax by means of a Super Tax. At the same time the graduation of the Death Duties was still further increased ; so that thrift and saving, which every wise statesman should endeavour to foster, were doubly discouraged. Other fresh taxes were imposed such as additional stamp duties ; but these were less open to objection.

Probably the worst feature of the Budget

was that the balance, which previous Chancellors had endeavoured to maintain between direct and indirect taxation, was definitely abandoned and that a greater burden was thus thrown on the direct tax payers who formed only about a twentieth of the whole population. Had it been practicable to levy the Income Tax on all earnings, however small, this would undoubtedly have been the most equitable as well as the most economical method of taxation. All indirect taxes could in that case have been abolished except perhaps the duties on such articles of luxury as wine, spirits and tobacco of which it might be desirable on medical or other grounds to diminish the consumption.

It would have been possible, when the franchise was extended in 1885, to have enacted that only those who paid income tax, however trifling the amount, should have a vote ; but the opportunity, having been lost then, is never likely to recur. The statesmen of that earlier period, however, could hardly have been expected to foresee a Budget of the present dimensions. The Treasury in those days kept a firm hand upon the Departments. The total annual

expenditure was below £100,000,000, and the Income Tax rarely exceeded 6d. in the pound.

The Budget was vehemently contested by the Conservative opposition in the House of Commons ; but the principle of graduation, which was really the most objectionable feature, excited less hostility than the Land taxes. These latter, owing largely to the expenses of collection, proved to be so unfruitful a source of revenue that they were repealed by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Mr. Lloyd George's Coalition Government, some ten years later.

The Finance Bill, embodying the Budget proposals, did not reach the House of Lords till late in the session ; but it had become apparent during the later discussions in the Commons that the Conservative leaders were determined to make use of their great majority in the upper house to destroy the measure and, in the words of Lord Milner, to " damn the consequences."

When Sir William Harcourt's Budget of 1894, which first established graduation of the Death Duties and equalised their incidence as between real and personal pro-

perty, had come before the House of Lords, there had been a movement among some of the Tory peers to reject the measure on the ground that it introduced two new principles of taxation. There would have been far greater justification for rejection then than there was in 1909 ; because the Budget of 1894, apart from the new principles involved, had only been carried through the House of Commons by very narrow majorities depending entirely on the votes of the Irish Members. There would also have been a far better prospect of a successful issue, as at that time the Rosebery government was weakened by internal dissensions as well as by their inadequate majority. Half its members would have secretly rejoiced to have seen the unpopular Chancellor defeated.

Lord Salisbury, however, with that clearness of vision which distinguished his leadership of the Conservative party, perceived the danger of a conflict between the two Houses upon a question of finance. Remarking drily that Budgets come and Budgets go and that they were unsuitable occasions for raising a constitutional crisis, he effectively suppressed all active opposi-

tion in the Lords. It would have been well if similar prudence had been displayed by his successor in 1909; but Lord Lansdowne showed himself unable or unwilling to resist the pressure of the Die-Hard peers and the Finance Bill was in consequence thrown out on the second reading by an overwhelming majority.

Incalculable harm had already been caused by Mr. Lloyd George's appeals to class hatred at Limehouse and elsewhere. The mischief, however, would have been far less serious if the House of Lords had not, by its injudicious action, afforded some plausible colour to his allegations and thereby caused even some moderate people to suspect that it was influenced more by self-interest than by patriotism.

The General Election of January 1910, which ensued on the rejection of the Budget by the Lords, maintained the Asquith administration in power. The Liberals, however, lost a number of seats and were no longer independent of the Nationalist members from Ireland. These latter had abstained from voting and a few had even voted against the third reading of the Finance Bill before the dissolution, on account

of the increase of the beer and spirit duties which were unpopular in Ireland. The measure when it re-appeared in the new parliament, was only carried by the support of the Nationalists who thus sacrificed the wishes of their constituents in the hopes of obtaining Home Rule. It seems not unlikely that their action on this occasion may have given a strong impetus to Sinn Fein, a movement destined in less than ten years to destroy their party altogether. The Lords offered no further opposition when the Finance Bill came up to them again.

The eternal Irish question thus became once more acute, simultaneously with the problem of the future powers of the House of Lords. An attempt to arrive at a reasonable settlement on both these issues was clearly desirable in the interests of the nation as a whole. No one was more conscious of this fact than King Edward and he strove to bring about an understanding between the leaders of the two parties. The moment seemed not altogether unfavourable as neither political party was actually in a strong position. The Liberals had lost their independent majority in the House

of Commons, and the Conservatives by their recent action had fatally compromised the future position of the House of Lords.

At the moment when the crisis was approaching its most acute stage, King Edward, after a brief illness, died on May 6th, 1910. A universal feeling of sorrow spread throughout the land ; and there were many who believed that the only prospect of a satisfactory settlement had departed with him. It is idle to speculate as to what might have happened if the King had lived six months longer, but we know that without him the statesmanship of the political leaders proved incapable of finding a solution.

A Conference between the Prime Minister, Lord Crewe, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Birrell, representing the Liberals, and Mr. Balfour, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Cawdor and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, representing the Conservatives, led to no result, although at one time agreement was believed to have been in sight. But ancient passions, dating back from past centuries, had been stirred up and could not easily be calmed. The Conservatives were handicapped by their

commitments to Ulster and the Liberals by their dependence on the Nationalist vote ; while the Nationalists themselves could no longer ignore the growing strength of the Sinn Feiners, who desired complete severance from Britain. Moreover, where Irishmen are concerned, reason does not readily prevail, for they are devoid both of the spirit of compromise which distinguishes the British and of the logical instinct of the French.

As regards Ulster, the difficulty was not merely racial and religious, as some Englishmen were apt to imagine, but it was also largely economic. Most of the industries and nearly all the wealth of Ireland were concentrated in the North ; and the Northern Irishmen had no confidence whatever in the probity or good faith of their Celtic fellow-countrymen, whom they looked upon as little better than savages. None the less the failure to reach a settlement in 1910 was a real disaster and reflected little credit on any of the parties concerned. It was destined a few years later to produce the most deplorable consequences.

The agitation for Female Suffrage first

began to assume considerable proportions about 1906. Up to that time no one had taken the matter very seriously, though resolutions in favour of enfranchising women had from time to time been passed by the House of Commons. But both the new Prime Minister (Campbell-Bannerman) and the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Balfour) were now known to be favourable to it ; and this circumstance doubtless encouraged the advocates of the change to redouble their efforts. As however political parties and also the Liberal Cabinet of 1906 were divided on the subject, it at first made little progress. The proposal, unlike all previous extensions of the franchise, called forth strenuous opposition from large numbers of those whom it was designed to benefit. Although some intellectual women joined the movement, most of the more intelligent and the more attractive were either hostile or indifferent. Indeed, if the women could have been polled, probably a majority would have declared against the change. The Suffragettes, as they came to be called, succeeded during the next eight years in making themselves a considerable nuisance. They interrupted public meetings, chained

themselves to railings, assaulted the police and, towards the end of the period, even set fire to houses and churches. When arrested for these crimes, they went on hunger strike and were frequently let out of prison in consequence. As might be expected they attracted to their banner the most objectionable of their sex. All the more excitable, ill-balanced and neurotic young women were found among the ranks of the Militant Suffragettes. Their proceedings were naturally repugnant to sober-minded people, and, had it not been for the war, would in all probability have irretrievably damaged their cause. The admirable conduct of women during the war—including, it must be admitted, even that of the violent suffragettes—produced a change in public feeling, and by the Reform Act of 1918 women over 30 were, with the assent of all parties, admitted to the franchise. The example thus set by Great Britain has since been followed by the United States and by Germany ; but the more logical intellect of the Latin races has so far prevented France, Italy, and Spain from embarking upon what may seem to a detached observer an experiment of dubious wisdom.

VII

Commercial enterprise developed steadily and seemed to suffer little from the destruction of capital caused by the South African and Russo-Japanese wars ; but, by depressing the value of securities and increasing the rates of interest, these wars tended to raise the value of money.

Though, owing to American and German competition, British commercial supremacy was no longer unchallenged, no attempt was made to dislodge London from its pre-eminent position as the central money market and clearing house of the world. Apart from the more favourable geographical position of London, it is probable that the high protective duties imposed on imports into the United States and Germany effectively prevented either of those countries from becoming the world's monetary centre. So far the experience since the war seems to show that, notwithstanding the possession of more than half of the available gold supply of the world, New York has not yet superseded London in this respect. Fortunately for this country, Americans

have hitherto displayed less aptitude than Englishmen for handling international business.

German industrial concerns were largely financed by money borrowed from the banks. This had created a thoroughly unsound position, as the German commercial magnates well knew. They had in fact developed their industries too quickly and were short of working capital. They therefore welcomed the war, as they believed that Germany could not fail to extract a huge indemnity from France which would put all things right. The length of the conflict and its ultimate issue never entered their calculations.

The returns of the London Bankers' Clearing House continued to show year by year a vast expansion of business; and trade in this country was undoubtedly in a stronger and healthier condition than in Germany. The Banking system was far more highly developed in England than elsewhere. Its soundness was proved by the ease with which it stood the strain of the war.

Amalgamations of businesses became more and more frequent; and it was increasingly

difficult for firms and companies, possessing only a small capital, to compete successfully with the larger combinations. The tendency of the time was undoubtedly in favour of big business, as it is called in America; but whether large trusts and combines are really advantageous to a nation is a question that is open to serious doubt. Perhaps the best that can be said for them is that they are preferable to, as well as more efficient than, the enterprises conducted by the State.

In the industrial world the chief event to be recorded is the gradual development of Trade Unionism into a political organisation. The earliest movement in this direction may be traced to the last decade of the Victorian Era, when the Trade Union Congress, under the inspiration of Mr. Sidney Webb and other theoretical Socialists who had never done a day's manual work, first began at their annual meetings to pass resolutions in favour of the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. These resolutions appeared at the time to be of an academic character; and it is almost certain that the majority of the delegates who voted for them in those

early days did not really understand their meaning.

The Trade Union leaders of the seventies and eighties of the last century were mostly Liberals in politics and sturdy individualists. Several of them, like Burt, Broadhurst and Fenwick, subsequently occupied subordinate posts in Liberal administrations; but the Unions themselves kept clear of politics. It is probable that in Lancashire a majority of their members usually voted for Conservative candidates.

The real grievance from which the working classes undoubtedly suffered, though they do not appear to have been conscious of it, was that the intelligent and efficient workman failed as a rule to obtain an adequate recompense. The Trade Unions themselves were largely responsible for this injustice; as their leaders, in order to obtain greater numerical support, concentrated their attention on securing a minimum standard of wages in any particular industry for the competent and incompetent alike. Under such conditions, the minimum tended to become also the maximum. There can be little doubt that the attitude adopted by the Trade Unions made it more difficult for

the capable artisan to rise above his fellows than had been the case fifty years earlier. As a result of this tendency, the more energetic workmen, seeing little prospect of bettering their position by hard work, aspired to become leaders of their Unions and, eventually, politicians.

The Unions became richer and more powerful during the period under review, as their membership was largely increased. A practice arose of sending some of the more promising young men, who had a facility for speaking, to Ruskin College, Oxford, and other similar institutions, where, under Socialist teachers, they usually imbibed the doctrines of Karl Marx in preference to those of the orthodox economists. Doubtless they discovered also that the life of an agitator, though of little use to the community, is more attractive as well as less arduous than that of a manual worker.

In the early years of the century serious attention began, for the first time in this country, to be given to the problem of housing and town-planning. This question had become acute owing to the rapid growth of all the large cities during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In Germany,

Bismarck, realising the importance of maintaining national health, had devoted much thought to the subject ; and there can be no doubt that the working classes in that country were far better housed than in England.

The Local Government Board, which was the central authority in London, exercised a somewhat inadequate control over local municipalities. It had taken over the duties of the old Poor Law Board ; and doubtless the administration of the poor law was regarded for many years as its main concern. It also, throughout the Gladstonian era, afforded an efficient check upon any extravagance on the part of the smaller localities. The Local Government Board has since been transformed into the Ministry of Health ; but it is unlikely that this change of nomenclature will produce any beneficial result.

A difficulty has usually been found in securing the services of competent and disinterested persons for the numerous local bodies. The work, which is unpaid and not particularly interesting, has consequently tended, especially in the case of the smaller authorities, to fall into the hands of

individuals with some axe to grind or of mere busybodies, of whom there appears always to be a never failing supply.

Disraeli, in his second government, had made some attempts to deal with the question of sanitation and, to a small extent, with housing; but very little was actually accomplished. This seems to have been due in some degree to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the slum dwellers themselves, who frequently displayed a reluctance to depart from the surroundings in which they had grown up. Consequently some of the model buildings in the East End of London came to be inhabited by a different class from that for which they were intended.

At Hampstead and elsewhere some experiments were made in the building of garden cities. But the land taxes, imposed by the Lloyd George Budget of 1910, greatly aggravated the evil by putting an end to the speculative builder, who, with all his faults, had at least provided houses. Before a remedy could be found the World War stopped all building operations for four years; and the present generation is paying dearly for the politician's lack of foresight.

VIII

It is too early to write about the literary achievements of the reign. In any event the nine years would make too short a period to consider separately in this connection; since nearly all the authors were either survivors from the Victorian Age or have continued to write in the Georgian. Lord Morley, whose "Life of Gladstone," one of the few great biographies, was published in 1903, is an example of an eminent author who wrote during the three reigns; but he will certainly find his place in history amongst the great Victorians.

Mr. G. M. Trevelyan established his reputation as a historian and worthily maintained the literary traditions of his family, while Rupert Brooke began to write the poems which may make his name immortal. Mr. Bernard Shaw continued to delight the more discriminating theatre goers with his numerous plays, and Mr. Arnold Bennett rose to fame as a novelist. Other prominent authors of fiction were Mr. John Galsworthy, Mr. Robert Hichens, and Mr. H. G. Wells.

Among the poets may be mentioned Mr. Thomas Hardy, who abandoned romance for poetry, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Mr. Masefield, Mr. Bridges and Mrs. Meynell.

The so-called Celtic Revival in Ireland produced, in addition to several minor poets, Mr. W. B. Yeats, who has found many admirers, and J. M. Synge, a dramatist of undoubted distinction.

Literary criticism was represented by Mr. John Drinkwater, who also wrote plays, by Professor Gilbert Murray, the eminent Greek scholar, and by Mr. (now Sir Edmund) Gosse.

To a Victorian, however, there appeared to be no prose writer comparable to Froude or Newman and no poet equal in melody to Tennyson or Swinburne.

In the world of art no painter or sculptor of supreme eminence is to be found ; though the portraits of Mr. Sargent, an artist of American origin, and of Sir William Orpen, which were painted during the period, may achieve enduring fame. A strange school of painters appeared, who were called, or called themselves, futurists. They were certainly original ; but this quality seemed to many to be their sole claim to distinction.

Later on came the cubists who, by a copious use of paint and sundry extraneous materials, produced even more curious effects. Both futurists and cubists were not without admirers in spite of, or perhaps owing to, the decadent nature of their art. It is, however, doubtful whether either of these schools, if they deserve that appellation, will have any permanent influence.

Cubism originated in France in 1908. It is singular that the country which had produced, in Meissonier, the last of the great painters should have given birth to the cubists ; for the latter despised all refinement of detail—the quality in which Meissonier, above all others, had excelled.

Among journalists the most remarkable figure was Sir Alfred Harmsworth, created Lord Northcliffe in 1905. He was a man of immense energy and ambition and, without exaggeration, he may be said to have transformed the modern English Press into the shape in which we see it to-day. His ideas were borrowed from America ; but he thoroughly understood every detail of the newspaper business and his ventures financially were highly successful. In addition to the journals like the *Daily Mail*, which

he founded, he acquired the control of many others ; and all alike were made to join in upholding his own views on any particular subject. The only duty of his editors was to carry out the instruction of their chief.

It is doubtful, however, whether Lord Northcliffe, with all his unprecedented advantages, really exercised as much influence on public opinion as some of the great editors of the previous generation. He was a past master in the art of propaganda ; and this talent he employed with advantage to his country during the last year of the War.

Sometimes he was entirely unable to influence popular feeling, as in the attack on Lord Kitchener over the question of munitions early in 1915. On this occasion the *Daily Mail* was publicly burnt in the Stock Exchange. In the following year he was more successful in engineering the downfall of the Asquith government and the substitution of Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister. But the politician and the journalist did not long see eye to eye ; and soon after the peace Lord Northcliffe was bitterly attacking his quondam hero and friend. Before the issue of the struggle

could be decided Lord Northcliffe died, prematurely worn out by a life of incessant strain and overwork. It was left to the more prosaic methods of Mr. Bonar Law to bring the Coalition Government to an unhonoured end.

Posterity will decide whether Lord Northcliffe's influence on journalism was beneficial or otherwise. Old-fashioned readers will regret the greater dignity and sobriety of judgment of the Victorian newspapers ; but doubtless the sensational headlines, interspersed with portraits of notorious criminals, cinema stars, sporting and social celebrities, are more in accordance with the hurried and restless spirit of to-day. It may well be that the success of this super-journalist was due to the fact that he supplied his countrymen with exactly the type of newspaper which the great majority required. The taste of the age demanded sensation ; and this quality Lord Northcliffe never failed to provide.

IX

Wireless telegraphy, though actually discovered in the closing years of the nine-

teenth century, came into general use during the reign of King Edward. The first Transatlantic messages were sent by Marconi in 1902; and during the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 wireless was extensively employed. Shortly afterwards it came to be applied to ships, whereby many lives have been saved.

The cinematograph pictures, which have become so great a source of popular amusement, were another invention of the period. As the supply in this instance appears at once to have created a demand, we must suppose that they provided for a want, hitherto unfelt.

Submarines, though invented some years earlier, were first included in the British navy in 1901; but the art of flying was the most important discovery of the time. Both airships and aeroplanes came into use, though chiefly for military purposes. They and submarines have certainly added to the horrors of war, though whether they have increased human happiness is more doubtful. Probably anything which, in these days, makes people more restless is an evil; and rapid modes of transit can hardly fail to tend in this direction.

Sir Almroth Wright's great work on vaccines was the most important contribution to medical science. He was the originator of the systems of Anti-Typhoid inoculation and Therapeutic inoculation for Bacterial Infections. By his discoveries many lives have been saved and the ravages of war have been diminished. Fewer lives, in proportion to the numbers engaged, were lost through disease in the Great War than in any previous one.

Great progress was made by Sir Ronald Ross with regard to the prevention of malaria and by Sir David Bruce in the treatment of sleeping sickness. Sir James Mackenzie made some valuable discoveries in connection with the heart.

Radium was discovered by the Curies in Paris in 1903 and has proved beneficial as a treatment for certain maladies.

The X-Rays, discovered by Röntgen in 1895, began to be generally employed in surgery. There can be no doubt that they have greatly facilitated the surgeon's task. In Germany there was also the well-known work of Dr. Wassermann.

Statistics show that the average duration of human life has been considerably pro-

longed, a fact doubtless due to increased medical skill and to more hygienic methods.

By the establishment of King Edward's Fund, an effort was made to place the London Hospitals on a sounder financial basis. In this beneficent work, as in many other philanthropic endeavours, the King himself took a prominent part.

Sport of every description flourished during King Edward's reign, but in order to meet modern requirements it tended to become more professional and much of its ancient charm was consequently lost. With the arrival of motor vehicles of all kinds, the facilities for reaching racecourses, football grounds and other popular attractions were greatly increased. The supply of cheap methods of transit apparently created a demand for them ; and persons of all kinds, who in former days had been content to spend their lives within walking distance of their homes, now developed a taste for movement if not for travel. It is open to doubt, however, whether the spirit of restlessness, thus developed, has added to the total sum of human happiness. Most of the Tube railways in London were constructed during the period ; and these were

an undoubted boon to the business community. The problem of handling the immensely enlarged traffic of the present day in London and other great cities has still to be solved. It may perhaps prove insoluble. Motor traction certainly effected a greater change in the habits of the people than any other invention of the time.

Golf and Bridge began more and more to occupy the leisure moments of the upper classes, while riding, except for hunting and racing, practically disappeared as an amusement.

The general tone of Society undoubtedly deteriorated between 1901 and 1910, but it was still immeasurably superior to that of the post war period. The decay of the landed aristocracy, which had begun in the mid-Victorian period, was probably the main cause. Persons whose sole qualification was their wealth, sometimes acquired by rather dubious methods, were now for the first time received into even the highest circles of Society; and the dignified refinement of the preceding reign gave place to ostentatious luxury. The majority of those who had become suddenly rich knew neither how to spend nor how to save

their money. Orgies of speculation in the shares of oil and rubber companies were a feature of the time ; and people who had never thought of owning even a pony and cart now deemed it necessary to acquire one or more motor cars. They appeared to be able to find more time for movement than for reflection or thought. For the most part the new rich took little interest in art or literature ; but, with a few notable exceptions, when they did patronise these, they selected the most decadent art and the least worthy forms of literature. With such conditions it is hardly surprising that the more ignorant among the population began to listen to the fulminations of Socialist demagogues. In the nineteenth century it had been the ambition of the commercial magnates and their sons, as well as of the landed gentlemen, to enter parliament ; but the service of the State had now ceased to be attractive and began to be left more and more to professional politicians. The establishment of the principle of payment of members in 1911 has since made matters worse by introducing a new type of representative, to whom the salary was an attraction. Up to that date, the British House of

Commons had enjoyed the unique position of being the only legislative assembly whose members worked for no pecuniary reward. This proud distinction was sacrificed in the supposed interests of democracy.

While the best period of English Society was certainly over, there still lingered in London and in many of the great country houses the traditions of the past ; and those who were fortunate enough to have experienced their charm will recall with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret the memory of days which can never come again.

No great moral or religious teacher arose to combat the growing materialism of the age, but of quacks and charlatans there were many, especially in the political arena. Short cuts to the millennium were lavishly promised to the multitude by Socialist orators. Thought-Reading and Spiritualism found many votaries ; and there was a strange importation from America, called Christian Science, about which it was aptly said that it was bad Christianity and worse Science. This singular religion, which asserted that pain and illness are imaginary and that all medical treatment is objection-

able, had actually been introduced into England during the closing years of Queen Victoria's reign, but did not find any considerable number of adherents until the early years of this century. Such success as was achieved would appear to have been in cases of hypochondriacal neurotics or *malades imaginaires*. In so far as many maladies are caused by nerves, the faith prescribed by Mrs. Eddy, the American foundress of the religion, may quite possibly have proved useful to some of her disciples ; just as consulting a physician often brings comfort to other people even before they have begun to take his remedies.

Materialism was coming more and more to pervade all classes of the people both in European countries and in America. But it was no longer the refined and cultivated materialism which had distinguished the French and English aristocracies of the eighteenth century. The great majority of the educated classes now seemed only to care for luxury and self-indulgence ; while the lower orders, finding it impossible through lack of means to indulge themselves similarly, sought consolation in the doctrines of Karl Marx, the most uncompromising

and least philosophical of all materialists, and clamoured for the destruction of the capital which furnished them with employment. It was apparently beyond the competence of statesmen or educationalists to provide the populace with an elementary understanding of economics.

It is scarcely credible that persons, claiming to be educated, are to be found who believe that there is a fixed amount of money in the world and that its possession by A and B prevents its acquisition by C and D ; but this childish fallacy is still widely held. To minds labouring under such a delusion industry and thrift must obviously appeal in vain.

X

The unrest and discontent which have been so conspicuous a feature for the past six years (1918–1924) are usually attributed to the Great War ; but, as Mr. Lothrop Stoddard has shown in his interesting book "The Revolt Against Civilization," their origin is certainly more remote. He has pointed out how the man who realises

that he is in an inferior position seldom, if ever, attributes his misfortunes to the true cause—his own or his progenitors' shortcomings—but believes them to be due to defects in the economic system which it should be the function of the State to remedy. The effect of this reasoning, or rather want of reasoning, is doubly unfortunate since it removes from the individual concerned all incentive to effort and at the same time renders him an increasing burden to the community. Throughout the Edwardian period an inadequate and unsuitable education was making the youth of Britain dissatisfied. Technical instruction was entirely neglected owing mainly to the retrograde policy of the Trade Unions; and boys on leaving school often wasted their time by acting as caddies at golf clubs or by entering some similar blind-alley occupation. The problem of education for the masses in a democratic country must necessarily be a difficult one. Even an enlightened autocrat, if he could be given despotic powers for the purpose, would be puzzled to find a satisfactory solution.

Though large sums, which the country can now ill afford, are expended on teaching,

the results are deplorable. Many mischief makers are produced, but few industrious citizens. A mental specialist has recently attributed the considerable increase of insanity to the attempt to cram into the minds of children knowledge which, both by temperament and heredity, they are incapable of assimilating.

It ought to be possible at a comparatively early age to select the children who are likely to profit by secondary education and to cease the endeavour to force up the remainder to standards beyond their powers of attainment. A more useful way of dealing with the child of mediocre ability would be to teach it some practical method of earning a living.

Modern civilisation has apparently outstripped the capacity of man, other than the most intelligent, to appreciate its advantages. It even acts as an irritant to those who fail through incompetence to obtain what they consider to be their due.

The problem which now confronts not only England but every country in the world is how to preserve from the attacks of the malevolent and the ignorant that cul-

ture which so many generations have toiled to create, and to hand it down to posterity unimpaired and undimmed.

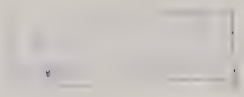
The ancient civilisations of Egypt and Greece, of Carthage and Rome appear to have perished from internal decay rather than from external pressure ; but, as these states were in each case established on a basis of slave labour, it is clearly unsafe to trace any analogy between their history and that of the free peoples of to-day. Perhaps the most urgent need of the present time is to reconcile democracy with liberty—a task that may well prove a hard one even for the ablest and most courageous statesman.

Like Renan, all true historians must love the past ; though perhaps few will share with him his envy of the future. If the dictum of Thucydides be true, that history will always continue to repeat itself, the utmost that can be expected is the recurrence at distant intervals of brief periods, such as Victorian and Elizabethan England, the 18th Century in France, the Renaissance in Italy, Augustan Rome and Periclean Athens, where, sometimes singly and sometimes in combination, are to be found the golden

ages of government, of literature, of art. So long as any records are preserved of the genius which illumined those fortunate epochs, the great men of action, the great writers and artists, who adorned them, will not have lived in vain. By their glorious example they will bring encouragement and hope to the elect even of those generations whose lot it may be to pass their days in dark or degenerate eras.

The men and women who had reached maturity when Queen Victoria died and who lived through King Edward's reign can look back upon those nine years with some measure of satisfaction. If the period was less prolific than its predecessor in great men and great achievement, they will recollect that it was by no means inferior in scientific discovery and inventions. In contrasting that time with the present age, with its many sordid aspects, they will remember the feeling of security, the greater refinement of society, the numerous amenities of life, the marvellous prosperity of commerce. They may recall also the endowment of the London Hospitals by King Edward's Fund, the stupendous advance in medical knowledge, the enthusiasm for scientific re-

search. The Great War was to prove subsequently that the men who grew up during those years could at least claim that they belonged to a race not yet wholly decadent and to a civilisation not altogether effete.



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